



POSTGAME NOTES

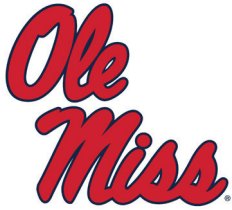
GAME 12 • #14 MISSISSIPPI STATE (8-4, 4-4 SEC) VS. OLE MISS (6-6, 3-5 SEC) • NOV. 23, 2017 • DAVIS WADE STADIUM

TEAM NOTABLES

- Mississippi State won the toss and elected to defer to the second half. MSU has won the toss nine times over its 12 games this season.
- Ole Miss lead in the series improves to 64-44-6.
- Jeffery Simmons blocked his third kick of the season on a punt attempt during the second half. State leads the SEC since 2014 with 15 blocks on special teams.
- Aeris Williams closed the game going over 1,000 yards rushing this season, the first 1,000-yard rushing game of his career. Under the Dan Mullen era, MSU has produced 13 1,000-yard rushers.
- Tonight's attendance was 59,345.

PLAYER NOTABLES

- Taking over for an injured Nick Fitzgerald, who was taken out of the game on MSU's second offensive drive, Keytaon Thompson turned in his first 100-yard rushing performance of his career with 121 yards on 26 carries with a score. Through the air, he went 13-of-27 with 195 yards and a score.
- Aeris Williams picked up 75 yards rushing on 20 carries to bring his season total to 1,019, the first 1,000-yard rushing season of his career and the first by a MSU running back since Josh Robinson in 2014.
- Kylin Hill turned in his best performance of his career with 82 yards on 13 carries, including a career-long 30-yard touchdown rush with 4:58 remaining in the fourth quarter. It was Hill's first touchdown in SEC play and his first since Sept. 9 at Louisiana Tech.
- Jordan Thomas caught a career-high four receptions for a career-best 65 yards. Deddrick Thomas also caught a career-high four receptions for 33 yards and a score, marking the first time in his career that he has scored in back-to-back games.
- With 13:28 in the second half, Jeffery Simmons blocked a punt for his third block on special teams this season, which ties SMU's Justin Lawler for the nation's best mark. He is the first Bulldog to record three blocks in a season since Robert Bean tallied five blocks over the 1999 season.
- Facing the Rebels in their own territory, Errol Thompson sacked Ole Miss quarterback Jordan Ta'amu for a loss of nine yards and forced his first career fumble with 1:02 remaining in the first half. Jeffery Simmons scooped up the ball for his second recovery of the season. The play would set up a Jace Christmann field goal to end the first half.
- Mark McLaurin intercepted his team-leading third pass of the season, returning it for eight yards to the Ole Miss 44 with 11:58 remaining in the game. The turnover would set up MSU's first touchdown drive.
- Montez Sweat recorded 0.5 sacks to bring his season total to 9.5, which ranks ninth in MSU single-season history. His 9.5 sacks are the most by a Bulldog since Willie Evans totaled 15.0 in 2005.
- Erroll Thompson set a career high with 1.5 tackles for loss. Johnathan Abram tied his career high with 8 tackles. Fletcher Adams also tied his career high with five tackles.
- Jace Christmann connected on a 44-yard and 37-yard field goals in the first half against the Rebels to improve to 11-for-12 on the season. He added his 37th and 38th PATs of the season, which moves him into fifth in MSU single-season history passing Scott Westerfield (2000).



REBEL FOOTBALL POSTGAME NOTES

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OLE MISS 31, #14 MISSISSIPPI STATE 28

Nov. 23, 2017 • Davis Wade Stadium



SERIES INFORMATION

- Saturday's meeting was the 114th all-time between Ole Miss and Mississippi State.
- Ole Miss now leads the all-time series against Mississippi State 64-44-6 and is 22-14-3 in games played in Starkville.
- This marked the 29th time the series has been played on Thanksgiving ... Ole Miss is now 17-12 in those games, including a 9-4 mark in games played in Starkville.
- It was the fourth Egg Bowl win in the last six seasons for Ole Miss.

CAPTAINS

- A.J. Brown (WR), Benito Jones (DT) D.K. Metcalf (WR), Breeland Speaks (DE), Rod Taylor (OL)

GENERAL NOTES

- Attendance for tonight's game was 59,345.
- The Rebels finish the 2017 season 6-6.

OFFENSIVE NOTES

- It marked the third game this season that Ole Miss recorded multiple 60-yard touchdown passes, most in the FBS ... The rest of the SEC has one such game.
- The Rebels had a season-high four scoring drives in which it scored a touchdown in three plays or less ... They've now accomplished that feat 15 times this season.
- WR **A.J. Brown** led Ole Miss with six catches for 167 yards and one touchdown.
- Brown became the single-season Ole Miss record holder in receiving yards with 1,252, passing Laquon Treadwell's mark of 1,153 yards set in 2015.
- Brown tied the single-season record with 11 receiving TDs.
- Brown became just the second Rebel ever to record six 100-yard games in a season.
- Senior RB **Jordan Wilkins** rushed for 110 yards and two touchdowns on 14 carries.
- Wilkins finishes the season with 1,111 yards rushing, becoming just the seventh Rebel to go over the 1,000-yard mark and the first to do so since Dexter McCluster did it in 2010.
- Wilkins season rushing mark of 1,111 is fourth-best all-time on the Ole Miss single-season rushing charts.
- It was the third straight time Wilkins has surpassed the 100-yard mark and the sixth time overall this season.
- Wilkins has rushed for at least one touchdown in seven of his last eight games.
- Freshman WR **D.K. Metcalf** had 67 yards receiving and one TD ... Metcalf finished the season with seven TD receptions.

DEFENSIVE NOTES

- The five turnovers are the most by the Rebels since 2015, when Ole Miss forced five Alabama turnovers.
- The Ole Miss defense tallied two interceptions for the second time this season ... The other time came this year when the Rebels had two INTs at Cal.
- Ole Miss has recorded three or more sacks in six of the last seven games.
- DB **Myles Hartsfield** recorded his second straight game with an interception.
- DE **Marquis Haynes** tallied one TFL, topping off his career-leading TFL total at 47.5.
- DB **C.J. Moore** hauled in his third interception of the season.
- LB **DeMarquis Gates** led the Rebel defense with 13 tackles ... It marked the seventh time this season he's recorded double-digit tackles.
- Gates finished the season with 114 tackles on the season, the most since Patrick Willis had 137 in 2006.
- For the second straight game, DT **Benito Jones** recorded a career-high in tackles for loss (2.5).

SPECIAL TEAMS NOTES

- Playing in his last game in a Rebel uniform, senior **Gary Wunderlich** became Ole Miss' career record-hold in multiple categories.
 - Career Points Scored: 1st - 350
 - Career Points Kicking: 1st - 350
 - Career Field Goals Made: 1st - 64
 - Career PATs Made: 1st - 158



HEAD COACH DAN MULLEN

November 23, 2017

Ole Miss vs. Mississippi State

Opening statement...

“Obviously frustrating. It was a big game, and you always want to go find a way to win that game. Our guys battled; they continued to battle for four quarters. Things didn’t go our way through much of the game, but we continued to battle, continued to fight, continued to compete for four quarters and try to make plays for four quarters. Unfortunately, I think in the end we just ran out of time. That’s frustrating, but I’m always proud of our guys. If you watch us play, we always play with relentless effort. I thought our guys gave great effort for the entire 60 minutes. We just wish we had 61 or 62 tonight.”

On quarterback Nick Fitzgerald’s injury...

“He had a dislocated ankle. I haven’t gotten anything besides that.”

On freshman quarterback Keytaon Thompson...

“I thought as the game went on, he continued to play better, continued to relax. He turned the ball over too much tonight. I think that’s a huge thing. We turned it over five times. You’re not going to win many games when you turn the ball over five times as a team. That’s not him. That’s just as a team, we turned it over five times. I thought as a young guy coming in, he continued to get more and more comfortable as the game went on in making reads and making plays. I think as everybody sees, he has a really bright future for us.”

On Thompson playing in the bowl game in the event Fitzgerald cannot...

“It’d be an opportunity to get a start and get a game, because if you look at him as a young guy, he was going to get a lot of reps anyway in bowl prep. Again, I don’t know the extent, but I would imagine that he’s going to be the guy. I’ve got to find out the extent of everything with Nick and when we play, but he’ll have the opportunity to get a start and see what he can do.”

On momentum swings during the game...

“I think our guys did pretty well. They continued to go out there and continued to play. You look at the explosive plays we gave up and the turnovers. If you look at the stat line, you’d be hard-pressed to think we didn’t win the game unless you look at the turnovers and the explosive plays. That was the difference. But I think with our guys, there was never frustration, there was never anything – just like last week. Things don’t always go your way. Just work harder. That’s the philosophy of everybody in the program, and that’s the philosophy of our guys playing tonight.”

On how well the team handled the emotions of this game...

“It’s always an emotional game. Rivalry games are that way. I thought we did. The way I judge it is, are we focused on executing and playing football? At rivalry games, you’re always going to see a little of that – the extra chippiness. There was certainly some of that out there today. But if you look for four quarters, our guys continued to play hard and execute. That, to me, is where the

focus is, where you're going out there and playing football and doing your job between the whistling. They did that all night."



HEAD COACH MATT LUKE

November 23, 2017

Ole Miss vs. Mississippi State

Opening Statement...

"I told the other people in the other press conference this wasn't my 14th Egg Bowl, this was my 41st Egg Bowl. To the people of the state of Mississippi, this is the most important game of the year. I am so happy for our players and our fans. This means so much to them. It hasn't always been easy for them. I told the guys in there, we have been on some better teams with some better records, but they will always remember this year and how they fought through adversity. I am so proud of those guys. These seniors went 3-1 against Mississippi State. Four for the last six against those guys, so we are really proud. We had a lot of things go on tonight. Jordan Wilkins is a 1,000-yard rusher, and I am really proud of that. AJ Brown is our leading receiver. Gary Wunderlich is our all-time leading scorer, so just a lot of good things that happened tonight. I am just really proud of that group of young men who are in that locker room."

On what he will remember after this season...

"The kids and how they fought. Everyone said they couldn't get up, and they kept getting up and battling. I am so proud of that group of young men. They stuck together, and the culture started changing. They were a young team, and we started off, they were a little selfish, but they kept fighting and believing in each other. You saw the culture slowly change. They had the opportunity to maybe win more games this season, but I am really proud of them as they continued to battle."

On does he think this will strengthen his chance at being head coach...

"I am not going to worry about that right now. I am going to enjoy this night and enjoy these players. I don't have any regrets. I am very grateful for this opportunity. It is a dream of mine, and I am thankful to have this opportunity."

On if he felt like the fourth quarter was really long...

"It was long, but I am happy we were able to battle. We made it harder than it probably had to be, but I am just grateful we got the win."

On how he thought the team did overall...

"I feel like our biggest advantage was our receivers versus their defensive backs. We wanted to take advantage of that. Anytime they played one high, we thought we could take advantage of that matchup. I thought we were maybe a little too sluggish, and we had one too many penalties. It was a chippy game. It was an emotional game, but I am proud as heck of our defense. We got a bunch of turnovers, but we made the plays we had to make to win the game."

On what he thinks allowed them to limit MSU's run game...

“I don't know. I think it carried over from last week. We have to watch the tape to see that. My heart goes out to [Nick] Fitzgerald. He is a heck of a player, a lot of respect for him. I hate to see that happen to him. My thoughts and prayers are with him.”



MISSISSIPPI STATE PLAYER QUOTES

November 23, 2017

Ole Miss vs. Mississippi State

WR – Gabe Myles – Sr.

On how determined he was to play in the game...

“I was very determined. That was the main goal. By God’s grace I was able to do a little bit out there.”

On how he felt the team handled momentum shifts in the first half...

“I think our guys handled it well. It’s a young team, and we had a lot of guys out. You look for the leadership out there from the guys out there who have played a lot. The guys did well. They had fight in them. They rolled every way. Every time we had to buckle down, we buckled down. I believe we took care of each other.”

On Keytaon Thompson’s demeanor...

“I liked it. He was cool and calm. This is what he has been training for. You have to be ready for it, and I think he did a good job tonight.”

QB – Keytaon Thompson – Fr.

On Nick Fitzgerald’s message to him...

“Nick was just encouraging me to lead the team and step up. He told me I had all the ability and talent to do so. He just wanted me to ball out.”

On what he took away from playing in the game...

“I learned a lot throughout the game. I felt like I got better as the game went on. I just learned from mistakes and learned what you can and can’t do and the certain shots to take. With play calling and coach Mullen, I learned a lot.”

On if there were any nerves going into the game after Fitzgerald’s injury...

“Not really. There weren’t many nerves, this being my first Egg Bowl. I didn’t feel any pressure or anything like that. I was ready to play. I just made some critical mistakes. If I had not, maybe the outcome would have been different.”

DB – Mark McLaurin– Jr.

On tonight's game...

"I'm very disappointed on the outcome of the game."

On Nick Fitzgerald going down with an injury...

"We kept talking to Keytaon (Thompson). I talked to the defense and offense. He knows what Fitz (Nick Fitzgerald) does and he's been behind him all year learning. We knew he could have the chance to come in and continue the game."

On coach Mullen's postgame message...

"We just ran out of time, we just executed and didn't protect the ball."



OLE MISS PLAYER QUOTES

November 23, 2017

Ole Miss vs. Mississippi State

WR – A.J. Brown – So.

On third quarter, 77-yard touchdown catch...

“I was kind of nervous that [Jordan Ta’amu] overthrew me. I just got a burst out of nowhere, and it just fell in my hands. I don’t know how I caught the ball. I just stuck out my hands, and it stuck.”

On the win...

“We’re really excited about this win. We had to get the Egg Bowl back.”

RB – Jordan Wilkins – Sr.

On the win...

“It’s just a great feeling. We worked hard all year. The record wasn’t what we wanted it to be, but we kept fighting as a team, trying to overcome all of the adversity that we faced, and there’s no better feeling than finishing off like this.”

On breaking through 1,000-yard rushing mark...

“Well the ‘W’ is most important, so that is the big thing. But 1,000 yards is definitely a plus. It feels great. Last year, I was telling people, ‘I’m going to run for 1,000, I’m working my tail off to run for 1,000.’ My o-line did a great job. It wasn’t just me. They opened up holes for me, and I made it there.”

DE – Breeland Spears – Jr.

On emotions after winning the Egg Bowl...

“I love it. To come here, get a win after everything we’ve been through, our guys just kept fighting each week. I love it. It’s the best thing to happen.”

On his intensity during the game...

“It’s the Egg Bowl. There was a lot of energy going, a lot of emotions, and I just wanted to let all that energy out. That’s what was going on.”